

THE
REASONS
FOR
REVISING BY AUTHORITY
OUR
PRESENT VERSION
OF THE
BIBLE,
BRIEFLY STATED,
AND
IMPARTIALLY CONSIDERED.

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IMPARTIALLY CONSIDERED.

C. A. M. B. R. L. D. C. T.

REASONS, &c.

ON most topics the Public could not, without presumption, be addressed by a Writer, distinguished neither for eminent talents, nor superior knowledge: In works of Taste and Genius the former are *expected*, and in those of practical Science the latter is indispensable. In religious subjects, as it seems incumbent on every man to write, who thinks he may be useful; so Readers should consider the subject matter, rather than the execution, and fix their eyes on themselves, rather than on the Author: For the chief *design* of every such Treatise is to convince, or persuade; and whatever may be the *effect* of the following pages, they exhibit nothing more than a plain argument on a most important subject.

THE translation of the Scriptures into our native tongue is one of the greatest
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blessings we enjoy in consequence of the Reformation. It enables every man to judge for himself in a concern infinitely more interesting to him than any other, and gives him in the most extended sense that christian liberty, on a proper use of which depends his eternal welfare. But as the sacred Volumes are thus thrown open to all, it is highly important that they should be as free as possible from those errors, which the carelessness of Transcribers, and the rashness of Interpreters naturally occasion in every composition of considerable antiquity.

THE Version of the Scriptures which is in common use with us, is, perhaps, the best extant. It is executed with great impartiality, and also with great ability, considering the very imperfect state of human learning, particularly in respect to the oriental languages, at the time when it was undertaken. Its stile, in general, possesses a beautiful simplicity, so well adapted to the genius of our Religion, and so pleasing to every Englishman, that it would be ill exchanged for modern elegance. Who could part with the expressions which he was first taught when a child, and which he has been
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used to love and reverence ever since he could read his Bible, without extreme regret? As every unnecessary deviation from the present Text would be unpleasing to all, so it would be extremely detrimental to the lower orders of Christians. A poor man's Religion is very closely connected with the particular expressions in which it was conveyed to him: He frequently has not considered their real force; — the effect they produced on his mind at first proceeded principally from his very natural sympathy with his Parents and Instructors, and the same expressions now excite in him similar feelings, almost as much, perhaps, from habit, as from reason; deprive him of the accustomed sounds, and you impair the religious effect of the sentiment. — Several other arguments might be brought to prove that a Revival of our present Version, wherein every alteration should be avoided, except those required by truth and perspicuity, would be decidedly preferable to a new one.

THE following pages will be employed in shewing, that the mistakes in our English Bible call loudly for a Revival; and that this measure, conducted in the manner now

proposed, does not lie open to objections in any degree comparable with the benefits that would result from it.

THE Hebrew Scriptures, like every other ancient book, have suffered through the human imperfections of Transcribers and Interpreters; and on many accounts the errors they have derived from this source are numerous and considerable. Ezra is supposed to have collected and revised the inspired writings of his Predecessors; but so great a length of time has since elapsed, that the oldest manuscripts at present extant do not reach that æra by twelve or fourteen hundred years. In addition to this misfortune, about the time of Ezra the Hebrew became a dead language; and the knowledge of it was almost entirely confined to the Jews till within a few centuries. Their dispersion and subsequent calamities were equally unfavourable to the preservation of this knowledge, and to the purity of their Scriptures. These, during a long period, were, perhaps, exclusively in the hands of this Nation; and not only their correctness, but their very existence depended chiefly on the care of private Synagogues:

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Nor could the Jews transmit either their skill in Hebrew, or the traditions with respect to the way in which their Forefathers understood the obscure parts of Scripture, from generation to generation, without great loss and corruption; persecuted as they were, and destitute both of a regular Priesthood, and of civil Government. — It might have been expected that Christians would have attended with the utmost care to the Hebrew Scriptures, which were so dangerously situated in the hands of the Jews: But from the earliest times they depended extremely on Translations, (particularly on the Greek Version of the Seventy;) and since the Council of Trent, A. D. 1546, wherein the Vulgate was declared to be authentic, those of the Romish Church have till very lately supported that Translation to the entire neglect, and in some measure to the disparagement, of the Hebrew Text. Under these circumstances it is almost a Miracle that the old Testament is come down to us in its native language; but the perseverance of the Jews, in every thing relating to their Religion, is well known; they have preserved their Scriptures from loss or absolute corruption through a long succession of ages,

notwithstanding their miserable condition, their great want of critical skill, and the absurdity of their Copyists, who have in many respects sacrificed the correctness of their Transcript to its fair appearance. When they committed mistakes, they frequently left them uncorrected, to avoid a blot or erasure; they omitted or added letters, without any authority, at the ends of lines, to preserve their evenness; and, from the same motive, often wrote part of a word at the end of a line, which would not admit the whole, and placed the entire word at the beginning of the following one: They also seem frequently to have taken marginal notes into the Text. It is apparent what numerous corruptions must have been derived from such egregious folly. In addition to this evil, the peculiar nature of the Hebrew language makes the errors which necessarily arise from human frailty very frequent, and all errors singularly detrimental: This it may be proper briefly to explain.

THERE is a conciseness in the Hebrew, of which those who are acquainted only with the languages of Europe can form no ad-

adequate idea. A Verb, Substantive, or Adjective, generally consists of three letters; and every variety of Conjugation, Mood, Tense, Person, Number, and Gender, to which these are respectively liable, together with a very great proportion of the Pronouns, Adverbs, Prepositions, Conjunctions, and Particles of the language, are expressed by adding in various situations one, two, or sometimes more letters to the original three. By these means it often happens, that the sense of six or seven words in Hebrew cannot be expressed by fewer than twenty in English. From hence it may easily be conceived, how detrimental the omission or corruption of a single Hebrew word must be to the sense of a sentence.— Mistakes are not only of worse consequence; they are also more readily made, and more difficult to rectify in Hebrew, than in any western language. Many of the letters are so much alike, that it is extremely easy for a Writer to read one for another in the copy from which he transcribes; or by negligence, or a slip of his pen, not to make the necessary distinctions between them in that which he has in hand. When a letter is omitted or changed in English, the error

is generally corrected without difficulty, because the word has no meaning in its corrupted form: But not so in Hebrew; there, from so few letters being used to express ideas, an omission or change of this sort, whether in the original word, or in its adjuncts, is very likely to produce a fresh word and a fresh meaning. When the Reader, perhaps, at length determines from the incongruity of this meaning with the context, that the sentence must be corrupt, he may find it difficult to fix on the corrupted word, and still more so to make the proper alteration: For almost every alteration he can devise produces some new sense; and out of so many, it is generally an arduous task, and often impossible, to select the right one on such grounds of probability as satisfy his mind.

FROM the joint influence of such causes, it would have been no matter of surprise, if the Scriptures had been so vitiated as to be almost useless: Which, most fortunately, or rather providentially, is not the case; and it is, probably, from this quarter that the full light of religious knowledge, promised to the latter times, will in part arise.

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The corruptions, however, of the Hebrew Text are numerous and important; but much has been done towards removing them, by the skill in languages and critical industry of modern times.

THE Translators who executed our present Version, in addition to the natural difficulties above-mentioned, had to struggle with others, from which we are happily freed. They undertook the work 180 years since, when knowledge in general, but particularly that of the eastern languages, was in a much lower state than at present. They had not the authentic information, with respect to the manners and customs of the East, which we have since derived from intelligent Travellers. The habits of life peculiar to that part of the world have suffered very little alteration since the days of the Patriarchs; and a knowledge of them explains many parts of the sacred History, and many allusions in the Prophets, which before were very imperfectly understood, and therefore obscurely rendered. Our Translators also, in common with the age in which they lived, laboured under two inveterate prejudices, which in a great measure

sure deprived them of the assistance to be drawn from sound criticism. In a few instances indeed they seem to have been undeceived; but in so few as scarcely to form an exception to the general assertion, that they adopted the erroneous opinions of their Contemporaries. These opinions were, that every copy of the Hebrew Scriptures was free from errors; and that the Masoretic punctuation was a constituent part of the Hebrew tongue.

It is astonishing that mankind should have believed the Hebrew copies of the old Testament to be perfectly similar to each other; and that all Protestants, at least, should have believed them to be also perfectly pure, though both facts are now found to be essentially otherwise. This was, in truth, believing that the divine Spirit guided the hand of every Copyist:—a stupendous Miracle, of which it was natural to suppose strict proof would have been required; especially as Christians saw that the new Testament, though of at least equal importance, was not thus guarded from the effects of human frailty. Perhaps history cannot produce a more remarkable instance
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of blind credulity ; and the conduct of our Translators shews with what obstinacy this opinion was retained. Their conjectural interpretations in some places could only proceed from a supposition that the Text was faulty ; and yet they acted in other respects as if they believed it to be pure : And it appears that they also thought the copies were similar, as they have taken no notice whatever of various readings ; and therefore, in all probability, made use of but one printed edition of the Hebrew Bible. These opinions deprived them of the prodigious advantages since obtained, by correcting the Text from a general collation of copies, and from a proper attention to the ancient Versions ; the most important use of which is, that of contributing to settle the true reading of the Hebrew.

THE present copies of the original Scriptures transmit the errors of the manuscripts from which they were taken, and have also accumulated a number of fresh ones. The latter, and many of the former, may be rectified by a general collation of the copies : For though all of them are singly very corrupt, they will frequently have become erro-

erroneous in different places, and correct each other; nor will any mistakes have found admission into all, but such as are of very ancient date, and had also obtained in all the manuscripts from which these copies were taken. Errors of the last description unfortunately are not few in number: Many of them may be exterminated by the help of the ancient Versions, (as will shortly be explained) but they evidently cannot by a collation of copies. Yet this measure, undertaken and executed by the late very learned and excellent Dr. Kennicott, has been of the greatest advantage to sacred literature. He, and his assistant, Mr. Bruns, compared together more than six hundred Hebrew manuscripts and printed editions; part of them throughout, and the other where any corruption in the Text was suspected. De Rossi, of Parma, has also collated more than four hundred Hebrew manuscripts: The third volume of his work was printed in 1786, and probably the remaining one is now also before the public. By these means a vast number of various Readings are collected: Many of them apparently of no considerable consequence; but not a few which are very important, and throw great light on the Hebrew

brew Text, where it has been long involved in darkness or contradiction.

THE ancient Versions (as has been before observed) have also been of signal use, in leading us to the true reading of the Jewish Scriptures. They were all, except the Arabic, made many ages before the date of the oldest manuscript we have: — The Septuagint about 250 years before Christ, — the greater part of the Chaldee Paraphrase about the time of Christ, — the Syriac Version in the first century, — the Latin Vulgate by Jerom in the fourth, and the Arabic in the ninth. These were taken from manuscripts probably much purer, because much older, than any now extant; and considered as proofs of the state of the Hebrew Text in those manuscripts, are extremely valuable. They have received great authority from Dr. Kennicott's collation: For they are found to be supported by ancient Hebrew copies in many passages, where their rendering was thought to have been mistaken or conjectural; consequently more attention will in future be paid to them, where they differ from all the manuscripts we now have, on the very probable supposition that
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most of these differences were authorized by the original Text when such Versions were made.

THE Reader will have a more adequate idea of the extent to which the Hebrew Bible in common use is corrupted, and of the assistance to be derived from Versions, and a comparison of copies, when he sees what the individuals, who have lately translated parts of Scripture, say on these points.

BISHOP Lowth (to whom England is principally indebted for the present improved state of sacred literature) reckons the number of whole words omitted in the original Text of Isaiah to be at least fifty, much the greater part of which, he thinks, he has supplied, with a good degree of probability, from Manuscripts and ancient Versions. He says that mistakes of other kinds are frequent in proportion. — Bishop Newcome, who has translated the twelve minor Prophets, tells us, that though these do not form a fourteenth part of the Hebrew Scriptures, yet the various lections which appear deserving of nice attention amount to about one hundred, and about forty of them are very

very material. — Though Mr. Blayney has given us no summary of the corruptions he found in the Text of Jeremiah, yet it is evident, from the notes to his Translation, that they were numerous and important. — Dr. Kennicott also, in his Remarks on select Passages of the old Testament, has pointed out a great number of errors in the Hebrew Text, most of which he has rectified very satisfactorily.

SUCH are the great advantages resulting from a collation of Hebrew Copies, and a proper attention to the ancient Versions: — Advantages which the Translators of our Bible could not have enjoyed to the extent we can, as the Samaritan Pentateuch, and also the Syriac and Arabic Versions, all of which have been of the greatest use in correcting the Hebrew Text, were not within their reach. They, also, entirely lost the very considerable assistance they might have received from the Copies and Versions then discovered, in consequence of their opinion that their Hebrew Text was pure. But this supposed pure Original, which they had before them, was in fact a very corrupt Version: — Very corrupt, because uncorrected

rected by a collation of copies; — and a Version, since it was attended by the Masoretic points; to which all the learned paid a blind reverence till very lately. The nature of these points, and their effect on our present Translation, are explained in a very masterly manner by the late Bishop Lowth, in the Preliminary Dissertation, prefixed to his Version of Isaiah. The Author is very happy in being able to quote the words of so excellent and so learned a man: — They are as follow, “ The Masoretic Punctuation, by which the pronunciation of the language is given, the forms of the several parts of speech, the construction of the words, the distribution and limits of the sentences, and the connection of the several members, are fixed, is in effect an Interpretation of the Hebrew Text made by the Jews of late ages, probably not earlier than the eighth century; and may be considered as their Translation of the old Testament. Where the words unpointed are capable of various meanings, according as they may be variously pronounced and constructed, the Jews by their pointing have determined them to one meaning and construction; and the sense, which they thus give, is *Their* sense

sense of the passage, just as the rendering of a Translation^{or} into another language is His sense; that is, the sense in which, in His opinion, the original words are to be taken; and it has no other authority, than what arises from its being agreeable to the rules of just interpretation. But because in the languages of Europe the vowels are essential parts of written words, a notion was too hastily taken up by the learned at the revival of letters, when the original Scriptures began to be more carefully examined, that the vowel points were necessary appendages of the Hebrew letters, and therefore coeval with them; — at least that they became absolutely necessary when the Hebrew was become a dead language, and must have been added by Ezra, who collected and formed the Canon of the old Testament, in regard to all the books of it in his time extant. On this supposition the points have been considered as part of the Hebrew Text, and as giving the meaning of it on no less than divine authority. Accordingly our public translations in the modern tongues for the use of the Church among Protestants, and so likewise the modern Latin translations are, for the most part, close copies of

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the Hebrew pointed Text, and are in reality only Versions at second hand ; translations of the Jews' interpretation of the old Testament. We do not deny the usefulness of this interpretation, nor would we be thought to detract from its merit, by setting it in this light : It is, perhaps, upon the whole, preferable to any one of the ancient Versions ; it has, probably, the great advantage of having been formed upon a traditionary explanation of the Text, and of being generally agreeable to that sense of Scripture, which passed current, and was commonly received by the Jewish nation in ancient times ; and it has certainly been of great use to the moderns in leading them into the knowledge of the Hebrew tongue. But they would have made a much better use of it, and a greater progress in the explication of the Scriptures of the old Testament, had they consulted it without absolutely submitting to its authority ; had they considered it as an assistant, not as an infallible guide."

SUCH then were the manifold disadvantages under which our Translators of the old Testament laboured. They had before them a book by many centuries the most
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ancient of any, and which had been transmitted down to the present times under such unfavourable circumstances as to be very corrupt. They translated from a language which has not been spoken for the last 2000 years; and which can never be thoroughly understood, as there are no other authors in it to assist in explaining those words and phrases, which occur but seldom. In difficulties of this sort recourse must be had to the Chaldee, the Syriac, and Arabic languages, which have a considerable affinity to the Hebrew: But in the reign of James I. every branch of oriental literature was in its infancy; and the manners and customs of the East, which the Scriptures continually mention in a cursory way, as being familiar to the nation for whose use these books were immediately written, were very imperfectly understood. Nor were these the only obstacles in the way of our Translators:—Unfortunate prejudices prevented them from making the best use of the learning and information of which they were possessed: They believed their Hebrew Text to be pure, though we now know it to be capable of great improvement; and they believed the sense pointed out by the Masoretic marks

to be given on divine authority, though in fact it was the interpretation of mere man many centuries after the Hebrew became a dead language. A few instances may be selected wherein they have departed from the original Text, and from the points of the Masoretes, but these shew nothing more than the faint dawnings of doubt; — certainly not an emancipation from the prejudices already mentioned.

It is no wonder that, under the influence of these natural and adventitious hindrances, our Translators should often have adopted such a rendering as greatly to cloud the sense, if not entirely to obscure it; — that they should very frequently have given us a wrong meaning, and, in many places, such a one as is contradicted by other parts of Scripture. To form a just idea how far these evils have been discovered to extend, recourse must be had to the recent Versions already mentioned, including the very valuable Prefaces and Notes, and to “Remarks on select Passages of the old Testament” by the late learned Dr. Kennicott; whose zeal for the promotion of true Christianity appears no where more clearly than in this
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posthumous publication. The Reader will find in these, as well as in other Authors, melancholy and abundant proof of the truth of the above assertions. It is by no means consistent with the nature of this publication to insert the whole, or any considerable number of the mistakes in our present Translation, detected by the learned: A few, however, of the most remarkable shall be produced from the last mentioned work *.

Gen. Ch. iv. V. 23, 24. Ken. Rem. p. 16.

It is very difficult, if not impossible, to understand the speech of Lamech in our present Translation;—"I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt; if Cain shall be avenged seven-fold, truly Lamech seventy and seven-fold." But the true sense of this passage is happily illustrated and confirmed in the third edition of Bp. Lowth's Prelections, p. 52;—that whereas Cain had been guilty of wilful murder, Lamech had only slain a man in his own defence; and therefore, if any one

* The following Instances are more fully explained, and the proposed Renderings vindicated, by Dr. Kennicott, and the Reader is desired to consult those parts of his Work to which References are made.

should kill him, his death was to be avenged on the murderer so much more severely than Cain's. The present Hebrew words are therefore properly rendered to this purpose—
 “ I have slain a man for having wounded me, and a young man for having bruised me: If Cain shall be avenged seven-fold, truly Lamech seventy and seven-fold,”

Gen. Ch. xxxi. V. 38 & 41. Ken. Rem. p. 26.

(V. 38.) “ *This twenty years have I been with thee, thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. (39.) That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee, I bare the loss of it: Of my hands didst thou require it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. (40.) Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. (41.) Thus have I been twenty years in thy house: I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle, and thou hast changed my wages ten times.*” Very extraordinary difficulties attend this translation; according to which Jacob remained no more than twenty years
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in Haran. These, among other strange consequences, follow from it. Judah is 14 when his son Er is born. Er is married at 9, and destroyed for profligacy. Onan is married at 8. Pharez, though said to be kept from marriage while young, yet has a son at 13. Esau goes to Ishmael, and marries his daughter, after Jacob goes to Laban; now Jacob must at that time have been 77, and yet Ishmael died when Jacob was 63. (compare Gen. xvi. 16. — xxv. 17. and 26. xxviii. 9.) On this subject Le Clerc has pronounced “*hiscæ in rebus occurrunt nodi quos nemo hætenus solvit, neque porro, ut opinor, solvet.*” But, contrary to this Critic’s expectations, all these difficulties are solved by a different rendering, which the Hebrew will very well bear. According to this rendering Jacob was forty years with Laban; 20 as a Servant, and 20 as a Friend and Assistant. In verse 38th of Ch. xxxi. he speaks of the time he looked after Laban’s cattle as a Friend; after he had served him 14 years for his Daughters, and before he served him 6 years for his Cattle. He says, “*during the ONE 20 years I was with thee, thy ewes and thy she-goats, &c.*” In verse 41, he speaks of the 20 years of service, and says, “*during*

the OTHER 20 years, for myself, in thy house, I served thee, &c." These are the alterations proposed.—The same distinction is expressed Ch. xxx. V. 29. "Thou knowest how I served thee, and how thy cattle was with me:" i. e. how I behaved during the time I was with thee as thy servant, and how thy cattle fared during the time they were with me as thy Friend.

Gen. xliv. 5. and 15. Ken. Rem. p. 36.

V. 5. "Is not this it in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth?"
 V. 15. "And Joseph said unto them, What deed is this that ye have done? wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?"
 —In these verses our Bible speaks of the good Joseph, as exercising an art, which Christians are taught to abhor, as derived only from a connection with the powers of darkness. When the passages are rightly translated, we are relieved from this difficulty. "V. 5. Is it not that in which my lord drinketh? therefore he would certainly discover (or find out) concerning it." "V. 15. And Joseph said unto them, What deed is this that ye have done? wot ye not that such

such a man as I could certainly discover it?"
 —The expressions intimate, that as this was Joseph's own drinking-cup, he would certainly miss it, and that his absolute power would as certainly enable him to find out the thief.

Exod. iii. 22. and xi. 2. Ken. Rem. p. 40.

SCARCELY any part of holy Writ has been more attacked by Infidels than the passages under consideration, in which the Israelites are said to borrow of the Egyptians, by the immediate command of God, what neither was repaid, nor could be intended to be repaid. The word, however rendered, *to borrow*, signifies *to ask, to beg, to pray for*. Certainly the Israelites, who had so long toiled for the Egyptians, might ask of them some return; and, no doubt, the latter would be glad to give them the richest presents, in hopes of saving themselves from the further vengeance of Heaven.

Num. xiv. 34.

Ken. Rem. p. 57.

—“ And ye shall know my breach of promise.” — It is no wonder that this expression,

pression, thus attributed to God, should be objected to by Infidels: But their objections are entirely founded on a fault in the translation. For the passage should be rendered —“ and ye shall know my vengeance, (or my indignation).”

Num. xx. 10. Keh. Rem. p. 59.

“ And Moses said unto them, Hear now, ye Rebels; must we fetch you water out of this Rock?” The crime of Moses, which was certainly great in what he said at this time, is not clearly pointed out by this Version; and many Christians, like the Author, may have been at a loss to discover it. As God had told Moses in V. 8. “ that he (Moses) should bring forth water out of the Rock;” and as God says in V. 12. that “ Moses believed him not to sanctify him before the children of Israel,” it appears that Moses said something which expressed a want of belief in God’s promise to enable him thus to bring forth the water: But it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to discover any thing which looks like disbelief in the passage under consideration, as it stands in our Bible. It is therefore happy that

that the Hebrew words may be rendered,—
 “*can* we fetch you water out of this Rock?”

Judg. i. 19.

Ken. Rem. p. 94.

THE Deists have objected that the Scripture in this place is perfectly inconsistent with the divine omnipotence: Because “though the Lord was with Judah, he could not drive out those who had chariots of iron.” The passage will be unexceptionable, when the word “could” (for which there is no foundation in the Hebrew) is removed, and the whole properly translated as follows;—“Jehovah was with Judah, so that he drove out the inhabitants of the mountain; but not to drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron:” i. e. he was with them to conquer the former, but not the latter; because the latter were very strong, and therefore were proper to be among the nations left in Canaan, as scourges to the Israelites when they might become rebellious, (see Ch. ii. 3. and 20—23. Ch. iii. 1—4.

Judg. xi. 31.

Ken. Rem. p. 100.

“And it shall be, that whatsoever cometh
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eth forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, *and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.*" — Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter has been represented by the enemies of Revelation as not less barbarous than the most bloody of the heathen rites. This induced Christians to consider with great attention the passage, in which this supposed sacrifice is recorded; and of late it has been the subject of much controversy. Dr. Randolph has explained its true meaning, and shewn that the Hebrew may very fairly be translated in this way — "*or I will offer up to him a burnt offering.*" The vow therefore was, that if what came forth to meet him was fit to be devoted to the immediate service of God, it should be so devoted; if not, he would offer unto God a burnt offering. — His daughter accordingly devoted the remainder of her life to the Lord, and assisted in such offices as were performed near the ark, and in the services of religion. The following part of this history by no means supposes her to have been sacrificed, or contradicts Dr. Randolph's interpretation.

2 Sam. v. 6—8. Ken. Rem. p. 105.

(6.) “ And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land; which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame thou shalt not come in hither, thinking David cannot come in hither. (7.) Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion; the same is the city of David. (8.) And David said on that day, Whosoever getteth up to the gutter, and smiteth the Jebusites, and the lame and the blind that are hated of David’s soul, he shall be chief and captain. Wherefore they said, the blind and the lame shall not come into the house.” —Every attentive Reader must find this extremely unsatisfactory, not to say unintelligible. Dr. Kennicott has restored the passage to sense and purity. — (6.) “ And the king and his men went to Jerusalem unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land; who spake unto David, saying, Thou shalt not come in hither, for the blind and the lame shall drive thee away, by saying, David shall not come in hither. (7.) Nevertheless David, &c. — (8.) And David said, Whosoever smiteth the Jebusites, and through
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the subterraneous passage reacheth the lame and the blind, who hate the life of David, (because the blind and the lame said, he shall not come into the house) shall be chief and captain. So Joab the son of Zeruiah went up first, and was chief."

I Kings ii. 9.

Ken. Rem. p. 131.

"Now therefore hold him not guiltless: For thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; *but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood.*"

—David is here represented as finishing his life, with giving Solomon a command to put Shimei to death; and to put him to death for the very crime, which David in the preceding verse says, he had sworn by the Lord should not be punished by him in this manner. Though this may not be inconsistent with the words of David's oath, it is repugnant to the spirit of it, and (if true) would be highly censurable. The Hebrew, however, will, without difficulty, admit of another translation; which shews how conscientiously this holy man adhered to his engagement.—"But bring *not* down his hoary head to the grave with blood."

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Not only the character of David, but the context strongly supports this rendering. For how did Solomon understand this charge of his Father? Did he put Shimei to death in consequence of it? Certainly not. For after he had immediately commanded Joab to be slain in obedience to his father, (see verses 5, 6.) he sent for Shimei, and knowing that he ought to be well watched, confined him to a particular spot in Jerusalem for the remainder of his life.

2 Chron. xxii. 2. Ken. Rem. p. 145.

It is here said, that Ahaziah when he began to reign was 42 years old, though it is also said that his father Jehoram at his death was only 40 years old. See 2 Kings viii. 17. 2 Chron. xxi. 5 and 20. If both these accounts could be true, it would follow that Ahaziah was born two years before his father! The right reading is twenty-two, and not forty-two years.

THE instances already given of corruption and mis-translation in our English Bible are extremely important; but those which follow are, if possible, more so: For besides
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bewildering the sincere Christian, and exposing him to the attacks of the Deist, they deprive our Religion of several strong proofs that Jesus Christ was really the person, of whom all the prophets spake, and that in him was the fulfilling of the Jewish law.

Deut. xxxiii. 8—10. Ken. Rem. p. 84.

(8.) “ And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy Holy-One, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah: (9.) Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him, neither did he acknowledge his brethren nor know his own children: For they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant: (10.) They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: They shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt-sacrifice upon thine altar.”—Thus our English Bible. The Holy-One, whom the Levites are here said to have tempted and to have strove with at Massah and Meribah, (Exod. xvii. 7.) is affirmed by St. Paul (1 Cor. x. 9.) to have been Christ. But how do verses 9. 11. of Ch. xxxiii. in Deut. which go on
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with the same subject, relate to our Saviour? Or indeed what sense can be made of V. 9. according to this rendering? The obscurity of the passage proceeds from a mis-translation: This is rectified by Dr. Kennicott, and a prophecy is brought to light, which was most remarkably and circumstantially fulfilled in our Saviour. (Matt. xii. 46—50. Mark iii. 32. Luke ii. 48.—viii. 21.) The new Translation is as follows: "V. 8. And of Levi he said, Thy Thummim and thy Urim be to the man, thy Holy-One; whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah. (9.) Who said of his father and his mother, I regard not; and who does not acknowledge as his brethren, and who does not own as his children, but those, who observe thy word and keep thy covenant; (10.) those who teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy laws; —those who put incense before thee, and a perfect oblation upon thine altar." —

THE Thummim and Urim were the most remarkable appendages of the High-Priesthood; and the command in V. 8. seems to be, that the tribe of Levi should give up this

office to Christ; who should come to put an end to the ceremonial law of Moses, and to be the High-Priest of the whole world. (See Epistle to the Hebrews.) Verses 9 and 10. are so clear as to want no explanation, except that incense and a perfect oblation are figures to express the religious duties of Christians. See Psal. li. 17. — also consult Ps. l. V. 14 & 23. in Ken. Rem. p. 200, 201.

2Sam. Chivii. V. 10, 11 & 14. K. R. p. 107 & 301.

“ V. 10. Moreover *I will appoint* a place for my people Israel, and *will plant* them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither *shall* the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as before-time, (11.) And as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the Lord telleth thee that he will make thee a house, &c.” “ (14.) I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: (15.) But my mercy, &c.” — A number of marks were delivered to the Jews in the
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writings of their Prophets, by which their Messiah was to be known: Consequently no man could prove himself to be that exalted Personage, except all these should be fulfilled in him. Jesus Christ constantly appealed to this proof of his divine mission; and his Apostles, as well as himself, pointed out the particular prophecies which he accomplished. The new Testament begins with asserting that he was "the son of David:"—In other parts a divine promise is declared to have been made to David, that the Messiah should spring from him. Now the message of Nathan, (recorded 2 Sam. Ch. vii. and 1 Chron. Ch. xvii.) is the only part of the history of David in which this promise can be found; and Christians have always referred to this Message when desired to point it out. But according to our present Version it cannot be shewn with any degree of clearness, if it can at all, that the prophecy under consideration relates to the Messiah. The late Deistical Author of *The Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*, has brought some formidable arguments against our Interpretation of it.—His first objection is, that in 2 Sam. Ch. vii. V. 10. the Prophet declares that the future prosperity

rity of the Jews shall be fixed and permanent on the accomplishment of his prediction ; an event which has by no means followed the birth and death of Jesus Christ :
 — The reverse has been the fact. This argument is founded on a mis-translation : For the Prophet is not speaking of the *future* state of the Jews, but recounting to David the benefits he and his people had already received from God. The rendering should be “ (8.) — I took thee from the sheepcote,
 — (9.) — and have made thee a great name :
 — (10.) Moreover *I have appointed* a place for my people Israel ; and *have planted them*, that they dwell in a place of their own, and move no more. Neither *do* the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as before-time, (11.) and since that I commanded judges to be over Israel, and I have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies.” — His second objection is, that the son here promised to David was (ver. 13.) *to build an house*, which the Objector supposes must mean a Temple : But it is evident that the house here spoken of is a household, — a family, and may very well mean the Church of Christ, which is often called the Temple of God and House of Christ. As this argu-
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ment does not depend on any fault in our Translation, I pass on to the third and most material objection, which is founded on part of verse 14. Here, says the Deist, it is supposed that this son might commit iniquity, which never could be supposed of the Messiah. This is certainly a very cogent argument; but the passage, when properly translated, instead of assisting the Deist, clearly speaks of Jesus Christ as the true Messiah. (14.) — Yea, in his suffering for iniquity, I shall chasten him with the rod due to men, and with the stripes due to the children of Adam. (15.) But my mercy, &c.” — We all know how exactly this was fulfilled in our Saviour; and I doubt not but it must give every Christian sincere pleasure, to see this Prophecy, thus rescued from the specious comments of the Infidel, become a very powerful argument in favour of his Religion,

2 Sam. xxiii. 1—7. Ken. Rem. p. 125.

“(1.) Now these be the last words of David. — David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet Psal-

mist of Israel, said, (2.) The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue. (3.) The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. (4.) And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. (5.) Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: For this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow. (6.) But the sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands: (7.) But the man that shall touch them must be fenced with iron and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place." — These last words of David begin with an introduction the most solemn and sublime; and the expectations, which the Reader naturally forms with respect to the importance of the concluding prophecy of the man after God's own heart, are raised to the highest pitch. He is, however, probably, much disappointed by what
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follows;—finding it obscure throughout,—in parts nearly unintelligible,—and not clearly pointed at any particular person or event. He has, probably, some idea that it relates to the Messiah: but how weak and uncertain is the light it affords him, compared with that which he receives from the following Version! — (Title) “(1.) Now these are the last words of David.” (Proem) “The oracle of David the son of Jesse; even the oracle of the man raised up on high: The anointed of the God of Jacob; and the composer of the Psalms of Israel. (2.) ‘The spirit of Jehovah speaketh by me; and his word is upon my tongue: (3.) Jehovah the God of Israel sayeth; to me speaketh the Rock of Israel.” (Song) “The Just One ruleth over men! He ruleth by the fear of God! (4.) As the light of the morning ariseth Jehovah; a sun without clouds for brightness; and as the grass from the earth after rain. (5.) Verily thus is my house with God; for an everlasting covenant hath he made with me, ordered in all things, and safely secured: For he is all my salvation, and all my desire. (6.) But the sons of Belial shall not flourish; as a thorn rooted up shall be all of them: For they

will not be taken kindly by the hand. (7.) And the man who shall reprove them, shall be filled with iron and a wooden spear: But in the fire shall they be utterly burnt with ignominy."—In his collation of manuscripts the Doctor found that the word "Jehovah," which clearly points out the Messiah as the object of the prophecy, belonged to the 4th verse; and he discovered errors in the common Hebrew Text of some of the others. The last verse seems evidently to refer to the iron in the hands and feet, and the spear in the side of our Saviour, when on the cross. In the bold language of the Prophet, he might be said to be filled with iron and a spear.

Isaiah Ch. ix. 1—7. { Ken, 3d Sermon sub-
joined to his Rem.

"(1.) Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphthali, and afterwards did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. (2.) The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: They that

that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. (3.) Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. (4.) For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. (5.) For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire. (6.) For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: And the government shall be upon his shoulder: And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. (7.) Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." Our Translators have greatly obscured the lustre of this celebrated part of Scripture. V. 1. is very far from being clear. V. 3. almost contradicts itself. V. 5. cannot, without great difficulty, be brought

brought into unity with the context; for it seems to point out a strange line of conduct for a personage, who in the next verse is called the Prince of Peace. But the Reader is most surpris'd at finding the person here spoken of, who appears clearly to be the Messiah, called "The everlasting Father:" A name which cannot be given to him without the most evident and absolute confusion of the two first Persons in the Trinity. — This noble and important prophecy, unequalled, perhaps, in sublimity, has recovered its original propriety and splendor in the Translation of Bp. Lowth.

(1.) But there shall not hereafter be darkness in the land which was distressed: In the former time he debased the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali; but in the latter time he hath made it glorious: Even the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the nations. (2.) This people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwelled in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. (3.) Thou hast multiplied the nation, thou hast encreased their joy: they rejoice before thee as with the joy of harvest; as they rejoice who divide the spoil. (4.) For the
yoke

yoke of their burthen, the staff laid on their shoulder, the rod of their oppressor, hast thou broken, as in the day of Midian. (5.) For the greaves of the armed warrior in the conflict, and the garment rolled in much blood, shall be for a burning, even fuel for the fire." — It will not be necessary to give verses 6. and 7. from Lowth's Version; for they are very nearly the same as in our Bible, except that the grand difficulty in the 6th is removed by the Messiah being stiled, not the Everlasting Father, but the Father of the Everlasting Age, i. e. of a Church to last for ever. In the above quotation a small alteration of Dr. Kennicott's is introduced. The passage under consideration is so uncommonly interesting, that it is hoped the Reader will excuse a short elucidation of it, chiefly borrowed from the same Author. — The two first verses declare, that the lands of Zebulon and Naphthali, (which lie most open to the ravages of an enemy) were distressed, debased, and even the lands of darkness and of the shadow of death; yet that in the latter time, the time of the Messiah, they should become glorious and full of light: — We are told how this Prophecy was fulfilled, Matt. iv. 15, 16. V. 3.

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The Prophet sees, in a divine rapture, the joy of all those through the whole nation of the Jews who waited for redemption: And the following verses point out the several causes of this joy, in terms the most striking and magnificent; figuring, under the prosperity of a temporal kingdom, the various blessings destined to attend the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah, which, contrary to the nature of earthly power, was to be established for ever. V. 4. paints the redemption from the tyranny of sin which held mankind in bondage: This was to be effected, like the victory over the Midianites, (Judg. Ch. vii.) by the immediate hand and power of God. V. 5. foretells that the effect of this spiritual victory should be lasting peace;—peace with respect to the future efforts of the powers of darkness, who should never rebel against the Messiah, or attempt again to enslave the world. This peace is shadowed out by the burning of the warrior's garments and arms, as become useless:—A bold, but not an unprecedented, figure in the sacred Writers. (See Psalm xli. V. 9.) V. 6. in the most sublime, and yet the most apposite, terms, describes the transcendent qualities of the Messiah. V. 7. proclaims
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the encreasing glory and happiness of his kingdom; — the exalted virtues by which it was to be established, — and the eternity of its duration: — It concludes with a strong affelevation that this wonderful prophecy would be fulfilled by the mighty God.

Hosea, Ch. vi. V. 2. Ken. Rem. p. 291.

“ After two days will he revive *us*, in the third day he will raise *us* up, and we shall live in his sight.” — We are told in the new Testament (Luke xxiv. 45, 46. John ii. 19. and 22. 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4.) that Christ, according to ancient prophecy, was to rise from the dead on the third day; and great stress is laid on this being strictly fulfilled. The only part of the old Testament in which we can hope to find this prophecy, is the verse under consideration; but as more than one person are here spoken of as revived and raised up, it seems almost impossible to apply this Text to the resurrection of Christ in argument with an Infidel. But this is a difficulty which by no means necessarily follows from the Hebrew expressions; for they may be rendered revive *him*, — raise *him*. The application of this Prophecy

phesy to our Saviour receives great authority from the following verse, which is finely descriptive of the superior light and happiness reserved for Christians. “ (3.) Then shall we know, if we follow on to know, the Lord: His going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.”

THE foregoing instances are extremely strong, and prove that in very important passages our English Bible by no means gives us a faithful Picture of its Hebrew Prototype. But let it be remembered, that these are only a few selected from a multitude. If they have made any impression on the Reader, what would have been the united effect of all those produced in Lowth, Blayney, &c.?

BUT though our public Scriptures, it must be confessed, are deformed by numerous and weighty errors, perhaps it may be said that, even in their present state, they most clearly instruct men in their duty, and prove their own authenticity; and that consequently they need not be corrected. It
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may be added, that if the curious wish for further information, they may have recourse to those Authors who have explained obscure and erroneous passages.

THESE are arguments which can influence very few. If every part of Scripture be intended to answer some important purpose, (as it certainly is, or it would not have been given to us,) every part ought to be put into the hands of Christians as free as possible from obscurity and error. Who can say what consequences may result from even small mistakes? but some of those that have been noticed, (and there are many like them,) are so considerable, as to deprive Christianity of much solid evidence, and furnish the Sceptic with his most formidable weapons. It is true, that our present Version appears to contain every thing necessary to salvation: But if this is a sufficient reason for not correcting those faulty passages which can be corrected, it would be a sufficient reason for throwing them out of the Text altogether;—or for throwing out the books of Chronicles, Job, the writings of Solomon, half the Gospels, and all the Epistles. Who will say that the Christian

volume

volume would not be able, without the help
 of these, to prove its divine origin, and to
 instruct men in their duty? It certainly
 would; and mankind ought not to have
 complained if their religious knowledge had
 been confined within these bounds. But as
 our heavenly Father has been pleased to
 afford his creatures further sources of in-
 struction, — to favour them with additional
 light, ill does it become man to curtail the
 gift of Heaven, and to permit any of this
 light to be obscured, on pretence that it is
 not wanted. — But, says the Objector, “you
 may consult Kennicott, Lowth, Blayney,
 &c.” Have all Christians who meet with
 difficulties time and ability to consult these
 Writers? Or if they had, is it in any respect
 decent or fit that the public Scriptures, con-
 fessed to want assistance, should be suffered
 to depend for support on these extraneous
 props? Our Bible is of infinitely more dig-
 nity and importance than all other books:
 It is the noblest gift of our Almighty Fa-
 ther; and as its unrivalled excellencies bear
 ample testimony to its divine origin, so
 should it be kept as pure as possible from
 the blots and stains occasioned by human
 frailty. Wherever the sense of the original
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is lost or perverted in the Translation, let the latter be corrected. But the correction should proceed with a care and attention suitable to the greatness of the concern; it should be made by the united efforts of the learned, regularly called together for that purpose. The Christian will then have a confidence in the alterations introduced, which the authority of no individual, however enlightened, however respectable, can give him. The latter would be sufficient in the interpretation of any profane Author; but the interpretation of Scripture, the sole guide of his religious conduct, is of such high importance, that it never can be too amply secured from error, — can never rest on too firm a foundation. If the reasons just given did not absolutely forbid us to rely on other Authors for that information, which our common Scripture-Version through its acknowledged faults will not afford, how could we on this plan oppose the cavils of the Deist?

THE national Bible is the great record of our Religion: — it is this which he attacks, and this must supply us with our defence: We cannot answer him with quotations

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from any private Author ; it is not against Lowth, or Kennicott, or Newcome, that he points his arguments, but against the public Religion, as it stands in the public and authorised Scriptures. — This circumstance alone furnishes a decisive answer to the foregoing objection. — I have now answered the arguments alleged to shew that a Revival of our Bible either does not insure to us such advantages, even without taking into consideration the bad effects it might produce, as to make that measure expedient ; or that we already possess those advantages in the works of learned men. The objections brought against the correction proposed from its probable bad effects, and from the impropriety of undertaking it at this time, will be canvassed in the course of the following pages. That much positive good would result from it we are absolutely certain. — When, however, it is recollected, that most of the neighbouring nations have cultivated sacred literature with great success during the last century, and that Germany in particular has done more in this way than even our own country ; — that a new set of English Translators would be in actual possession of all the light Europe has thrown

thrown on the sacred Text, and that much additional improvement might be expected from their extensive learning and united labours, applied with suitable earnestness and deliberation to this one great object:— When these circumstances are properly weighed, we may fairly presume that no inconsiderable benefits, which neither have been pointed out, nor can be at this time to their full extent, would arise from an authorised Revision of our Version.

BUT the Author does not rest his argument on these benefits, however probable, — however important: — He has pointed out various sources of error in our Bible; — he has shewn that, in consequence of these, numerous errors do exist, — errors which deeply affect very material parts of Scripture, — which deprive the Christian of his religious light, and not unfrequently aggravate this injury, by laying him open to the attacks of the Infidel; — he has further shewn, that through the labours of a few learned individuals we are, to a great degree, in actual possession of a remedy for this evil: — From these premises he infers, that our Scriptures ought to be corrected;

and he has answered those who assert that this measure is unnecessary. Such is the tenour of the Author's reasoning, — not resting on assertion, — not depending on contingencies and probabilities, — but founded on strong facts.

LET us now see what disadvantages and inconveniences there may be, to counter-balance the certain good that would result from this measure. They are light as air; but such as they are, they shall be fairly stated and appretiated.

SOME may say, "Let us introduce no change, for we cannot tell what further changes may be required of us, or what bad effects may follow." — This is an argument which the lukewarm and the timid oppose to every improvement, however important and desirable. Had this been listened to, neither the Reformation nor the Revolution could have taken place; and we should have been still subject to Romish superstition and to despotic power. Nothing can be more weak than declining to make proper alterations, because improper ones may afterwards be demanded. This is confounding the natural

tural distinctions between truth and error, and giving weapons to our adversaries; whose ground of objection would not be narrowed by any thing so much, as by candidly altering what is not fairly defensible. Such conduct would shew mankind, that our proceedings are directed by rational conviction, not by fear or prejudice. It is certainly not less the part of wisdom and magnanimity to give up what is wrong, than resolutely to maintain what is right. — As to possible bad effects which are not specified, a fear of them should never prevent the execution of a plan, which will produce much positive good,

BUT what bad effects have been specified, as likely to result from a Revival of our Bible? — “That this will probably destroy the beauty, simplicity and force, which its style now possesses.” — The present Version certainly has, to a high degree, the qualities ascribed to it in this objection; And we are taught from our infancy to look upon it with such affection and respect, that we not only, perhaps, give it credit, where it does possess these excellencies, for a greater share of them than it actually has, but frequently

persuade ourselves of their existence without any real grounds, and are blind to all but very glaring defects. This opinion of the Scripture stile, though in part ill-founded, is very conducive to our religious improvement:—It may be unfavourable to us as Critics, but it tends to make us good Christians; and as this is the great end to be produced by the Scriptures, it appears to me that their present language should almost always be retained, even where it is faulty, provided it expresses clearly, and also grammatically the sense of the original. Where it fails in these respects, it ought surely to be corrected—None can wish to retain any beauties, or supposed beauties, of expression, at the expence of truth and good sense. A Revision on these principles would make an essential change in the intrinsic merit of our Bible, but very little in its general stile; especially if proper care were taken to imitate the present Scripture language in the corrections that might be thought necessary. —

It is further objected, that by altering the Bible you will undermine the Religion of all the lower orders of Christians:—

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They have never imagined that their Scriptures can be faulty; — they reverence the expressions to which they have always been accustomed; — they are wedded to the Book delivered down to them by their forefathers; and when they see this presented to them in another form, they will scarcely believe that their Religion is unaltered: — Nor will they know what further changes they may not expect, if human authority once begins to new-model the word of God,

WERE it true that alarms of this sort would follow the measure proposed, they would afford a strong argument against adopting it on light grounds, but not when it is so loudly called for by numerous and material errors. To be intimidated by them in this case, would be to sacrifice the essential interests of religious truth to apprehensions founded on misconception and prejudice; — apprehensions too, which will not outlive the present generation. If, on a Revival taking place, the common people should really harbour the opinions imputed to them in the objection, they ought to be told by their Pastors, that their Scriptures are a Translation from other languages, and liable

to mistakes like every other book: — That the correcting of these, instead of new-mo-
delling or changing their Religion, tends to
do away the changes which time and human
frailty had made in the word of God, and
to bring it back to its original purity: —
That if they turn to the parts altered, they
may frequently see how much the alteration
has been for the better; and that where
they cannot see this, they may depend upon
there having always been a good reason for
what has been done: — That as no change
whatever has been introduced into their
Religion, they have not a shadow of reason
to fear that any will. This would be de-
fending truth as it ought to be defended, —
by candour and reason; — it would be act-
ing on the principles of the Reformation,
and would produce the desired effect, in
quieting men's minds: — To keep them
quiet, by keeping them in the dark with re-
spect to the state of our present Version,
would be the system of Popery previous to
the sixteenth century; — a system which even
that Religion is become too liberal to con-
tinue. — But what reason is there to sup-
pose, that any description of men would see
the Revival of their Bible in the light stated
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in the objection? Did an alarm of this kind spread through the nation, when any of the various Translations which took place between the years 1530 and 1620 were first published? On the contrary, Christianity derived great advantage from the discussion they occasioned. Men were at first divided in opinion with respect to their comparative merits, but they never imagined that their Religion was changed. In a little time they quietly acquiesced in the use of our present English Bible for this plain reason, that it was evidently the best Version they had; and undoubtedly similar reasons would soon make them perfectly satisfied with the alterations now proposed, which are not to be compared in point of number and appearance with those which were brought forward by King James' Translators. — With respect to the veneration paid to our present Bible on account of its antiquity, it would, when revised, still claim the same as before, except where truth or perspicuity required a correction; and surely no antiquity can make error and obscurity venerable, or ought to be alleged as a reason for their not being removed from the Book of Life.

BUT

But some, perhaps, who are convinced that our Bible should be revised, may think that this is not a proper time for the undertaking; — that a few more years will throw additional light on sacred literature, that we should wait till we can carry our work to a greater degree of perfection, and, if possible, make future Revisions unnecessary. —

THIS argument will probably exist in as great force against correcting the Scriptures fifty or a hundred years hence, as at present. Religious knowledge will continue to increase, in proportion as human learning improves, and as new light is obtained from Versions and Manuscripts: — Those known at present must be of further use when more fully considered, and fresh ones in great numbers may still be collected in different countries, particularly in the East. Without doubt in twenty years we should be able to rectify more errors in our Bible than we now can: But shall we in the mean time prolong the difficulties of the Christian, and the fancied triumph of the Infidel? The mistakes discovered are well worthy of correction: — Should others of importance be brought

brought to light in the next or the subsequent generation, let them also be corrected. The true rule in this case is to revise as often as a Revision is necessary: — To defer this longer, is an injury to Religion; — to put it off till it can be done in such a way as to preclude the necessity of future Revisions, is, in fact, to put it off for ever. — These are the principal if not all the objections, which have been made to the measure proposed; and surely they ought to have no weight whatever to prevent or to delay a work, which has been shewn to be so much wanted. — Other societies of Christians are setting us an example. The Swedes, sensible how much has lately been done towards a better understanding of the original Scriptures, have revised their Version with the utmost accuracy. Even the English Roman Catholics, — few in number and dispersed, — votaries of a Religion averse to every change, — labouring under restraints and unpopularity, and therefore likely to be peculiarly tenacious of their old opinions and forms, are not blind to the advantages which will attend a better Translation of the Scriptures. Their desires will soon be gratified by Dr. Geddes, an intelligent and liberal

liberal member of their Communion: Much may be expected from him, although, undoubtedly, the work which he has undertaken would be carried nearer to perfection by the joint efforts of a number of learned men. Surely the Church of England, always among the foremost in promoting true Religion, will not be the last to profit by the late improvements in sacred literature.

THE arguments in the foregoing pages chiefly apply to the old Testament: This, without doubt, stands in most need of correction; but should a Revival of it take place, many learned men are of opinion that it may be extended to the new Testament, particularly to the Epistles, with great advantage to Christianity.

THE Author has now finished what he had to offer on this important subject:—A subject in which he thinks the cause of Religion greatly interested, and he wishes some abler pen had taken it up. He has endeavoured, however, not to be deficient in dispassionate industry, and has made a free use of the writings of Lowth, Geddes, Kennicott, Blayney, and Newcome:—He doubts

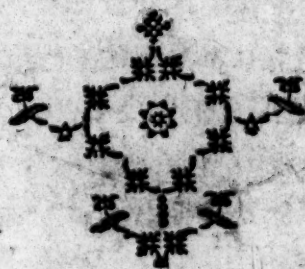
doubts not but he should with gratitude have added to these names that of White, had he been fortunate enough to have met with the Professor's Sermon (which is now out of print) on a Revival of our Scriptures. These illustrious men, eminently qualified to judge in the present case, concur in strongly recommending a correction of our English Bible, or a new Version. Should the Reader meet with any pleasure or information in this Essay, to them he is principally indebted for it. — Their works have supplied the Author with almost all his facts, which it has been his aim to state simply and with candour. He thinks they cannot fail of impressing conviction on the minds of those who consider them: But should they not, he is far from wishing to influence his Readers, by any unfair means. On religious subjects, as it is peculiarly important that men should form a true judgement, so a Writer would be unpardonable who attempted to mislead by delusive colouring or false rhetoric. No fame is sought by this publication: Its only purpose is to give those who may not have opportunity for more laborious reading, a short

short and fair view of a question deeply interesting to every Christian.

It may be asked, why an application was not rather made to the heads of the Church, who are the natural guardians of the purity of our Scriptures; and who must, after all, determine how far an alteration in them may be necessary, and to what extent? The answer is obvious;—that, no doubt, applications of this sort have frequently been made, and by persons whose extensive knowledge and high characters would ensure a candid investigation of the question. No effect, however, has been produced: Nor is this matter of surprise; for in an affair of such importance our Bishops would naturally act with great caution:—They might think, (and, perhaps, justly) that no alteration ought to take place in the Scriptures of a nation so enlightened, till the public voice should declare it to be necessary. If the Public has not hitherto formed a decided opinion on this subject, it is probably owing to the want of proper information: i. e. conveyed in a form not attended with too much learning or too great an expence

for common Readers. To remedy such a deficiency, the Author has thrown in his mite; and will think himself happy if the short Treatise here offered to the Public shall contribute, in any degree, to make the state of our Bible more generally considered; for this, sooner or later, must terminate in its improvement.

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